WILL OFFENSE BOUNCE BACK AGAINST DALLAS?

THE BIRDS HOST THE COWBOYS FOR TOPS IN THE NFC EAST. PAGS 30-31

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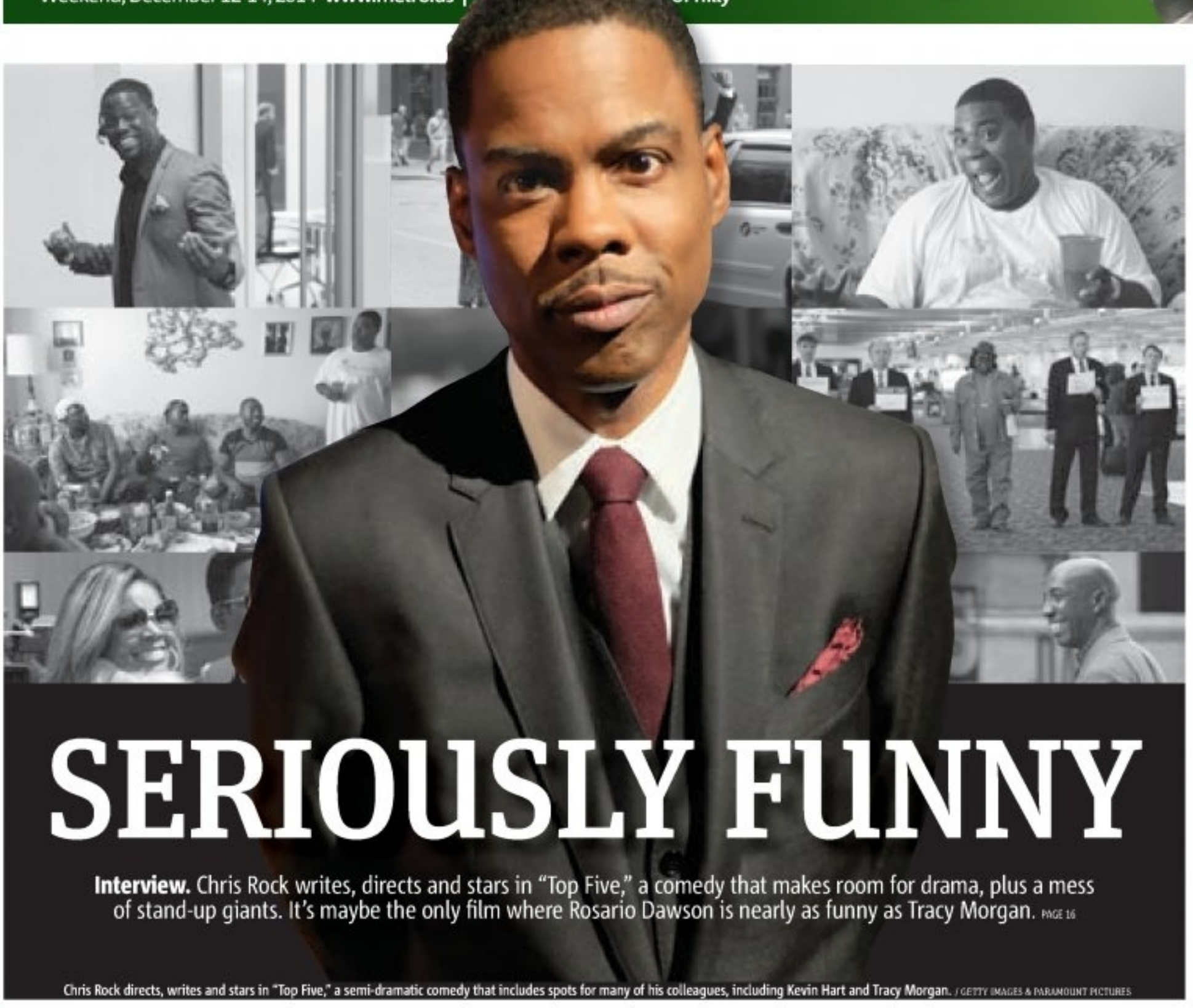
Weekend, December 12-14, 2014 www.metro.us | MetroPhilly



SERIOUSLY FUNNY

Interview. Chris Rock writes, directs and stars in "Top Five," a comedy that makes room for drama, plus a mess of stand-up giants. It's maybe the only film where Rosario Dawson is nearly as funny as Tracy Morgan. PAGE 16

Chris Rock directs, writes and stars in "Top Five," a semi-dramatic comedy that includes spots for many of his colleagues, including Kevin Hart and Tracy Morgan. / GETTY IMAGES & PARAMOUNT PICTURES

Mantua artist wins right to keep studio

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Philly police test drive body cameras

PAGE 06

Travel the world with Netflix's 'Marco Polo'

PAGES 20-21

Warm up with hot cocoa at these spots

PAGE 23

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1 NEWS

Top 3

The best of Metro.us

1 Metro food blogger CiCi Li: What people around the world eat on Christmas

2 The secret winter wonderland of Pittsburgh

3 Two holiday recipes to try with your kids

On the go

Want to read Metro on your mobile device? Get the app! All you have to do is search for Metro US in the App Store or Google Play to get all the latest in news, sports, lifestyle and entertainment for free.

The exterior of Dupree Studios in Mantua. / CHARLES MOSTOLLER, METRO

Mantua artist wins eminent domain fight

Philadelphia. The city has dropped its motion to seize an artist's studio, leaving plans for a retail plaza in the dust.

The Philadelphia Redevelopment Authority agreed to give artist James Dupree back the deed to his Mantua studio, two years after it seized the property under eminent domain and set off a legal fight.

"Unfortunately, the legal costs associated with Mr. Dupree's appeals make it impossible to continue," PRA executive director Brian Abernathy said. "Despite all the work to date, PRA will end condemnation proceedings, enabling Mr. Dupree to keep his studio."

The studio was condemned along with more than 50 other properties to give to a developer planning a retail plaza across four city blocks.

Dupree lost his case in Commonwealth Court, but his lawyers filed appeals papers on Wednesday.

Abernathy says Dupree's opposition has ended the plans.

"While we have explored the potential of building around Mr. Dupree's property, a viable project under these conditions is not possible," Abernathy said.

The proposed development, "Westview Plaza," was pitched as a grocery store that would more food options to Mantua, which the PRA called a "food desert."

Plans reviewed by Metro show that a large part of project was intended for other retail options and parking.

"We are thrilled to receive the news that the PRA has decided to drop the condemnation proceedings and return the deed to Dupree Studios," said Dupree's daughter Giavonna.

The Philadelphia Redevelopment Authority had offered Dupree $600,000 for the 8,600-square-foot studio, which he bought nine years ago and completely refurbished. Dupree said the property was worth more than $2 million in the developing neighborhood.

Visit **Metro.us** to read more about the battle over the studio.

Quoted

"We remain committed to contributing to the development of the Mantua community."
Giavonna Dupree

SAM NEWHOUSE
@scnewhouse
sam.newhouse@metro.us

Walker (left) was killed by Jones (right) in 2012. / FILE PHOTO

Guilty. Rafael Jones convicted of killing veteran cop in April 2012

Rafael Jones was found guilty Thursday of murdering Philadelphia Police Officer Moses Walker.

Jones, now 25, of North Philadelphia, attempted to rob Walker, 40, who was heading home after his shift around 5:30 a.m. on April 18, 2012, a few blocks off Temple University's campus. Chancier McFarland, Jones' accomplice, said Jones shot Walker when he appeared to reach for his gun.

McFarland pleaded guilty and testified against Jones for a reduced sentence.

Jones was convicted of first-degree murder, which usually carries a life sentence without parole, but Jones will first undergo mental health testing before his sentencing on March 6.
METRO

Homecoming

Bill of Rights
NATIONAL ARCHIVES

Bill of Rights coming home

An original copy of the Bill of Rights will be on display at the National Constitution Center starting Monday.

The rare pice of American history, one of only a dozen surviving copies sent to the new states in 1789, is on loan from the New York Public Library. The library gained possession of the copy in 1896.

The Constitution Center will borrow the document until 2017.
TOMMY ROWAN

West Philadelphia

Drexel student raped off campus

A 21-year-old female Drexel University student reported to police Thursday that she was sexually assaulted around 5 a.m. Wednesday by a man who first threatened her with a meat clever in her off-campus apartment.

The woman said she awoke to a noise in the living room of her Mantua apartment and upon inspection found a man holding the utensil.

After the assault the man fled. METRO

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Love triangle. Drexel student stabbed over a girlfriend's text

A text message to a Drexel University student's girlfriend started a fight that ended with a 20-year-old man getting stabbed in the back, police said.

Wang Xiadong was hanging with two other male students outside Myers Hall on the 3300 block of Race Street in University City around 3:30 a.m. Wednesday, when a shoving match ensued.

The rumpus exploded into a fight and one student stabbed Xiadong in the back, police said.

Police said the fight was sparked by a text message sent from one of the students to another student's girlfriend.

Xiadong was treated at the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania and released, police said.

Junlin Ye, 19, and Pu Wang, 23, who both live on Benjamin Franklin Parkway, were charged with aggravated assault, criminal conspiracy and simple assault.

TOMMY ROWAN

Third try

Greenlee reintroduces sick-leave bill

City Councilman Bill Greenlee won't give up on his mandatory paid-sick-leave bill. Greenlee introduced the bill at Council's last session of 2014 on Thursday. The bill would require private businesses with 10 or more employees to offer paid sick time.

TOMMY ROWAN

Philly cops begin body camera trial program

Lt. Thomas McLean shows a model of the body camera the Philadelphia Police Department will use in a pilot program. / CHARLES MOSTOLLER, METRO

Police. Body cameras may change the face of policing, but will they work?

Thirty-one Phiadelphia police officers in the 22nd District are now testing body cameras that could eventually be used citywide.

"I volunteered because why not," said Officer Lisa Figueroa, a nine-year veteran of the force about to start using her body camera. "The public can see how police come in contact with people."

The six-month program began Dec. 1, after calls for police reforms were heightened. President Barack Obama has proposed a $75 million bill to equip departments nationwide with body cameras.

"Is it a panacea? No," said Commissioner Charles Ramsey. "Could it have provided a more complete record in Ferguson? Yeah, probably so. Staten Island? I don't know."

Attorney Larry Krasner said cops should be required to have the cameras now whenever they interact with the public. "It's just an invitation for bad cops who intend to do bad things to do them off-camera," he said.

Quote

"Now it's not 'he said, she said.' They have actual evidence."

Officer Paul Camarote

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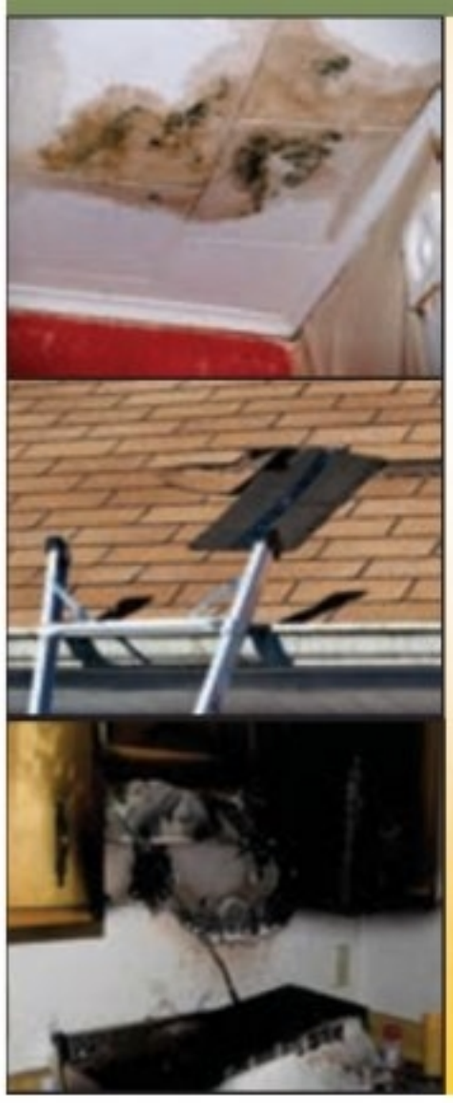
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Kenney calls for cars to clear City Hall sidewalk

Parking wars. Jim Kenney wants to repeal a 30-year-old law that allows for parking at City Hall.

Cars parked on the apron of City Hall on Thursday. / CHARLES MOSTOLLER

City Councilman Jim Kenney parks his car on the curb by the Masonic Temple across from City Hall.

"And that's a privilege for me to have that space," he said, "but I can still walk the 30 feet to [City Hall's] front door. I don't have to be right next to the front door."

Kenney unveiled plans at Thursday's City Council meeting, the last of the year, to clear the cars parked on the apron of the historic building.

In 1981, the council passed a law that allowed public officials and workers to park their cars on the Northeast side of the building. In 1992, then-Mayor Ed Rendell cleared the cars with an executive order.

Former Mayor John Street maintained the order, but "now we have this car creep coming back over the last year where it's becoming a parking lot again," Kenney said.

So Kenney plans to repeal the original law passed in 1981, and clear the traffic.

Hearings on the matter will be held in the New Year.

"There's curb parking available," he said.

Mark McDonald, spokesman for Nutter, said parking is provided on "a case by case basis."

TOMMY ROWAN
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City Council

Brown: 'Yes means yes'

Councilwoman Blondell Reynolds Brown called Thursday for city colleges to adopt a "yes means yes" sexual consent policy instead of the current "no means no."

Brown's proposal, offered Thursday, coincides with a national movement to shed the requirement that rape victims prove they said "no" to sex and demonstrated physical resistance. Under Brown's proposed law, they would have to prove that they didn't say "yes" or give ongoing voluntary consent.

TOMMY ROWAN

Court. Fattah Jr.'s got court troubles

Chaka Fattah Jr., 32, the son of Congressman Chaka Fattah, returns to court Friday for a hearing on whether he can represent himself in his trial on federal fraud charges.

"I'm hopeful that the court agrees that I have the right to represent myself," Fattah Jr. said.

Fattah Jr. moved Wednesday to quash the indictment charging him with overbilling a charter school that was receiving state funds — and using the money for himself.

"The records show that FBI agent Richard Haag and other individuals lied in front of the grand jury. Those

Chaka Fattah Jr. / PROVIDED

lies were used to secure the indictment," Fattah claimed. "I think the prosecutors in some cases knew the people were lying, and in other cases, they should have known."

SAM NEWHOUSE

Chief admits CIA used 'abhorrent' methods on detainees post 9/11

Controversy. The program was run under former President George W. Bush.

Brennan made an appeal to move on from the controversy over past CIA actions. / GETTY IMAGES

CIA Director John Brennan said on Thursday that some agency officers used "abhorrent" methods on detainees captured following the Sept. 11 attacks and said it was "unknowable" whether harsh interrogation techniques yielded useful intelligence.

With his agency under fire in the aftermath of a Senate report detailing the CIA's use of torture on detainees after the 2001 attacks, Brennan rejected the report's conclusion that the agency had deceived the White House, Congress and the public about its interrogation program.

"Our reviews indicate that the detention and interrogation program produced useful intelligence that helped the United States thwart attack plans, capture terrorists and save lives," Brennan told a news conference at the agency's Virginia headquarters.

"But let me be clear. We have not concluded that it was the use of EITs (enhanced interrogation techniques) within that program that allowed us to obtain useful information from detainees subjected to them," Brennan said.

"The cause-and-effect relationship between the use of EITs and useful information subsequently provided by the detainee is, in my view, unknowable," he added. **REUTERS**

Quoted

"We know we have room to improve."

Brennan

Storm

Rain, wind lash Northern California

Heavy rain and high winds lashed Northern and central California on Thursday, knocking out electricity to tens of thousands of homes in the San Francisco Bay Area and prompting school closures across the region as a major storm moved in from the Pacific.

Winds howled through Sacramento, the state capital, with gale-force gusts rattling buildings and downing trees. A peak wind gusts of 147 mph was reported on Mt. Lincoln near Truckee, California. **REUTERS**

A CAR DRIVES THROUGH STANDING WATER IN SAN FRANCISCO. / GETTY IMAGES

Cleveland. Mayor disagrees with DOJ report on city's police

Frank Jackson / GETTY IMAGES

The mayor of Cleveland said on Thursday that he did not agree with all of the Department of Justice's findings in a scathing report on the widespread use of excessive force by the city's police, saying it will take time to agree on how to reform the troubled department.

A federal investigation published this week concluded that Cleveland police supervisors tolerated, and, in some cases, endorsed the use of unnecessary or unreasonable force.

The DOJ also found that officials who conducted internal reviews took pains to present the police officers involved in the best possible light.

He said the city would conduct a review of the DOJ's conclusions to see which criticisms it agreed with, as it works out a consent decree with the federal government on how to reform policing.

"We will be delving into that, we will be reviewing that to see what is in there is accurate, which is inaccurate, which is a misstatement, which are examples that may be factual, may not be factual," he said. **REUTERS**

Quoted

"I'm not accepting things just because the DOJ said it."

Mayor Frank Jackson told reporters at a news conference

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Oil resumes decline, falls toward $64, nears five-year low

Stock. There are signs that ample supply will be more plentiful in 2015.

Quoted
"We may see some technical bounces, but it is too soon to speak of a sustainable price recovery."
Carsten Fritsch, analyst at Commerzbank, which on Thursday cut its 2015 Brent price forecast to $73 a barrel from $82
U.S. auto owners get an early Christmas gift as prices fall. / REUTERS

Oil resumed its downward move on Thursday, falling toward $64 a barrel and within sight of a five-year low. Crude prices sank on Wednesday as OPEC forecast an increasing supply surplus in 2015, U.S. crude inventories unexpectedly rose and OPEC's most influential voice, Saudi Arabia's oil minister, shrugged off the need for an output cut.

Christopher Bellew, a senior oil broker at Jefferies in London, said the outlook remained bearish. "It would be unwise to say the market has marked the bottom," he said.

OPEC said demand for its crude in 2015 would fall to its lowest in more than a decade, indicating a large supply surplus in 2015 without OPEC output cuts or a slowdown in the U.S. shale boom.

"There's nothing the rest of OPEC or the world could do to pressure the Saudis," said Tariq Zahir, managing member at Tyche Capital Advisors in New York.

While low prices will discourage exploration and drilling in some places, he said, other producers who could still profit at lower prices may ramp up output to boost revenues through higher volume. REUTERS

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Walmart selling iPhone 6 for $129 in discounting surge

New discounts.
Walmart aims to drum up traffic two weeks before Christmas.

Stores are trying to get shoppers back in the door. / GETTY IMAGES

Wal-Mart Stores Inc., seeking to attract customers after the post-Thanksgiving rush, is selling Apple's iPhone 6 for as little as $129, a reduction of $50 from the retailer's usual price.

Starting this week, the company is offering that price when customers buy the 16-gigabyte model and sign up for two-year contracts from AT&T, Verizon Wireless or Sprint, according to a statement.

Less than 10 percent of Americans have completed their shopping for the holiday, the company said, citing the National Retail Federation.

Larger screen

$279

Walmart is selling the larger-screen iPhone 6 Plus for as little as $229, down from $279.

Walmart also is selling the iPhone 5S for $49 with a contract, down from $79, and Samsung's Galaxy S5 for $79, compared with $139. Even before the cuts, the prices were below retail levels.

The fresh wave of discounts reflects the fact that shoppers aren't as focused on one-time shopping events such as Black Friday, the company said.

Industry-wide, the long Black Friday weekend was a disappointment for retailers. The NRF estimated that sales declined 11 percent during the period. BLOOMBERG

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Can a smartwatch improve your workout?

Sweat it out.
We put Google's new Android Wear to the test.

Like most people, I answer emails after hours and sleep with my phone next to me, but the gym is the one place where I happily unplug. So when Google invited me to a workout class to test its new Android Wear smartwatch, I was curious. Would I have to respond to a work email mid-lunge? Text my friends through voice activation while doing a sprint? Here's what really happened and my verdict on whether buying a smartwatch is worth it.

How it works

To really make use of all its functions, you need to sync the smartwatch with your phone. In this case, it meant ditching my iPhone for the Nexus 5, which I wore on an armband during my workout.

Google incorporated both the Nexus 5 phone and the Android Wear smartwatch into the fitness class. / PROVIDED

The class started with a cardio warm-up. We didn't actively use the smartwatch for this portion of the class, but it was tracking my activity, such as the number of steps taken and heart rate, which was pretty cool to look at after the class.

To my surprise, the instructor didn't make us answer any emails or texts during the session. Instead, she showed us how to use the VimoFit app, which acts as your own virtual trainer by creating custom workouts based on your fitness goals. A virtual person shows you how to do each move, which was helpful for a visual learner like me. We used our smartphones for the trainer aspect of the app while the watch kept track of our activity levels to make sure we were reaching our fitness goals.

At the end of the class, the trainer showed us how Android Wear can track your sleep cycle by monitoring how many times you wake up during the night and how much REM sleep you get.

EMILY LAURENCE
@EmLaurence
emily.laurence@metro.us

Positives

Seeing exactly how hard and much I'm exercising in plain numbers is addictive and made me go out of my way to walk instead of taking the subway just to get my numbers up. You can also sync playlists to your watch and wear Bluetooth headphones. The GPS tracker can be helpful for runners and bikers.

Negatives

Having to rely on the smartphone for the VimoFit app is cumbersome. There also doesn't seem to be a way to turn off messaging during a workout if you still want to use the fitness aspects of the watch without being reachable.

Verdict

When it comes to using a smartwatch for fitness, it can be motivating to ensure you're living as healthy a lifestyle as possible. Considering I already take my phone to the gym to stream music, wearing a smartwatch doesn't seem like much of a leap.

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2 CULTURE

Chris Rock: To the next level

Interview. The comic says he treated "Top Five," his latest movie, just like his stand-up.

Sherri Shepherd joins Chris Rock and Rosario Dawson in "Top Five." / PARAMOUNT PICTURES

CHRIS ROCK
GETTY IMAGES

The usually political Chris Rock doesn't talk about Ferguson or race or about politics at all when discussing his latest film, "Top Five." The focus instead is on the movie, which he wrote and directed, and in which he stars as a Rock-esque movie star getting close with a sharp-witted journo (Rosario Dawson).

Like a lot of stand-up comics, Rock hasn't had a ton of luck with movies, and even the ones he's directed himself in ("Head of State," "I Think I Love My Wife") haven't fully utilized his considerable gifts. Yet "Top Five" shows a real leap forward and has been getting the kinds of notices that are usually reserved for his stand-up specials. Here's what he had to say about a film that, even for him, feels very much next level.

MATT PRIGGE
@mattprigge
matt.prigge@metro.us

Quoted

"I treated the editing like it was writing. It was like, 'Let's make music, let's do something different.'"
Chris Rock

Stand-up guy:

"I made this movie just like my stand-up. I used to have a movie process and a stand-up process, and I'd say, "These are the jokes for the movie," then I'd have a whole other file for stand-up. Not this one. I workshopped it. The goal was to get a movie that felt like my stand-up."

Trying not to be lazy:

"The worst movies tend to have the best people in them, because they aggressively suck. There's lazy movies. Then there's 'Howard the Duck.' I knew I was going to try, but luckily we didn't suck."

Drama is easy, comedy is really hard:

"There's nothing worse than a bad comedy. Drama, you get credit for completion. I like 'Gone Girl'; you can make nine different version of 'Gone Girl' that work. But when you're doing a comedy there's kind of one version that works."

For the love of rap:

"This is a movie with a bunch of characters who grew up on rap and we don't question it. We don't call it hip-hop; it's just music. We treat it like any other music. In most movies they treat rap music or hip-hop music like it's this new thing."

Real talk

But seriously

Lately, Chris Rock has been making the rounds, opening up about his thoughts on race in a country led by Barack Obama, about Michael Brown and Ferguson and about the allegations against Bill Cosby, who gets name-checked in "Top Five."

In an interview with New York magazine, Rock told Frank Rich, "White people were crazy. Now they're not as crazy." He added, "To say Obama is progress is saying that he's the first black person that is qualified to be president. That's not black progress. That's white progress. There's been black people qualified to be president for hundreds of years."

It's very different for his kids, who, he tells Rich, are "encountering the nicest white people that America has ever produced. ... I drop my kids off and watch them in the school with all these mostly white kids, and I got to tell you, I drill them every day: 'Did anything happen today? Did anybody say anything?' They look at me like I am crazy."

GABRIELLE UNION
PARAMOUNT PICTURES

Love is all around

Chris Rock's cast on Chris Rock

"Top Five" makes room for scores of talent such as fellow comics and legends such as Ben Vereen and actors such as Rosario Dawson and Gabrielle Union. Here's what they said about their director and his experimental, collaborative methods.

Gabrielle Union: "He gave us his script; he gave us his baby. But he wasn't like, 'My baby is perfect, my baby's testing off the charts.' He doesn't assume he has created the next 'Schindler's List.' He's saying, 'I want to get there, please give me real feedback. I didn't assemble a bunch of people to just kiss my ass and tell me it's amazing. Let's work together and please give me notes so we can create magic.'"

Sherri Shepherd: "He did what was in the script, then you kept going and kept going. You thought, 'Is he going to say cut at any point?' He let you go and go and go, and that's when you found that magic."

Rosario Dawson: "We'd be doing something really, really serious, and he'd say, 'We need a joke right about here.' He wouldn't say at the beginning or end of a scene. He was like, 'Right here we need something to lighten it up.' That why I keep calling him a conductor. It was like music — he knew right when [a scene] needed to have something."

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Review

'Top Five'

●●●●○

In Chris Rock's third turn as director, he also stars as Andre Allen, a movie star trying to break into serious filmmaking and who spends a day with a journo (Rosario Dawson).

The lowdown Rock has spent most of his film career following the tired path laid out for comics: broad vehicles, voice work, comedic cameos. "Top Five" is his first film that really feels like a film, while at the same time feels at least spiritually like his stand-up: It's angry but not incensed, and only mildly political. But it has the go-anywhere shape of an extended routine, hailing from the same inspirational source. He's found his movie voice.

Parts of it are easy, including digs at reality TV and Tyler Perry. Yet the movie is alive and exciting. This is a party film, with Rock as both star and ringleader, constantly surrendering to or sharing the floor with the many, many cameo-ing legends. But even more intoxicating is the way it mixes and matches tones. It's not afraid to get serious and sincere, which is not to say maudlin. **MATT PRIGGE**

Chris Rock's "Top Five" includes scenes of he and Rosario Dawson walking and talking on an unusually nice day in New York City. / ALI PAIGE GOLDSTEIN

Bible/Torah movie. Ridley Scott's Moses tale 'Exodus' at least has really nifty plagues

The latest epic from Ridley Scott tackles the Moses story, starring Christian Bale as the freedom fighter who believes God — appearing here as a petulant, 9-year-old bully — has told him to free the Hebrews from an evil Egyptian pharaoh (Joel Edgerton).

The lowdown: Ridley Scott's Moses romp nails the two things it needed to get right: The parting of the Red Sea is cool — if not as jaw-dropping as the one in Cecil B. DeMille's "The Ten Commandments" — and the plagues are tops. Does it matter that the rest is semi-coherent and often stiff, plus noticeably hacked down from a much longer cut? When a swarm of super-crocs seize fishermen, filling the Nile with blood, or when the sounds of locusts are blowing out subwoofers, perhaps you can forgive Christian Bale's sketchily defined Moses or a film that trips over its storytelling.

In fact, 150 minutes seems barely enough to tell it all. Scott guts the story down to a skeleton; the only real meat on it is its two big set pieces. Surely there will be another Ridley Scott director's cut, but it's possible the foundation is too wobbly to ever work. A more practical and less sentimental epic-maker than DeMille, Scott seems to be aiming for a quasi-revisionist take on a tall tale, with semi-believable explanations for its least realistic flights of fancy. But this is a Bible story that resists a rational presentation, since it's so heavily reliant on divine intervention. Believing Scott can one day turn this into something more watchable will require more than faith. **MATT PRIGGE**

Christian Bale's Moses hangs with Aaron Paul's Joshua and Ben Kingsley's Nun, neither of whom have much screen time in "Exodus: Gods and Kings." / KERRY BROWN

Review

'Exodus: Gods and Kings'

Director: Ridley Scott

Stars: Christian Bale, Joel Edgerton

Rating: PG-13

●●○○○

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Review

'Wild'

● ● ● ● ○

Reese Witherspoon steps into the tattered hiking shoes of Cheryl Strayed, who in the '90s trawled some 1,000 miles solo in an attempt to get over personal tragedies and some terrible life decisions.

The lowdown: For a movie about someone walking, "Wild" is awfully busy. Flashbacks are everywhere, memories lurking around every tree or stretch of arid desert. When the narration track isn't filled with her grumbling, Strayed is talking out loud to herself.

None of this is a complaint, mind you. This is a film where the past really is as important as the present. The reasons for Strayed's mega-jaunt are doled out gradually. She's working her way through a tower of pain: the passing, via cancer, of her beloved spark plug of a mother (Laura Dern); a failed marriage; a streak of self-destruction.

Reese Witherspoon heads onto the trail in "Wild." / FOX SEARCHLIGHT

This sounds Hallmarky, but "Wild" comes off tough, rough and funny. When she started out, Witherspoon tried the glamorous Hollywood thing, but her gifts were meant for small and personable films like this, especially ones that tapped into the actress' innate short fuse. Strayed may have noble, life-reaffirming intentions, but she's a total grump, one who greets every obstacle with profound irritation.

It's less about a journey than a character study of a strong character — or, as it happens, characters. Dern, as Strayed's mom, is as rich a character as Strayed. Always smiling, effervescent and endearingly fumbling, Dern is the kind of supporting character whose absence is always felt, and she and Witherspoon are so good together it's easy to ignore that Dern is only nine years her screen daughter's senior.

MATT PRIGGE

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Now you know exactly where to find Marco (Polo!)

LORENZO RICHELMY / NETFLIX

Interview. Lorenzo Richelmy brings the famed explorer to life in Netflix's new show.

If you only ever knew Marco Polo from the swimming pool game, you've been missing out. The Italian merchant spent over 20 years in Mongolia during the 13th century, meeting and advising the emperor Kublai Khan, thus making one of the first connections between the Western world and the East. Thanks to Netflix, he's getting the biopic treatment in an epic, multimillion-dollar series starring newcomer Lorenzo Richelmy, an Italian actor who learned archery, martial arts, horseback riding and, notably, English, to take on the role.

How long did it take to feel comfortable with English?

Well, the time I had. [Laughs] I had seven weeks before we started shooting. Then the fact that we shot chronologically helped me a lot. At the beginning of the show, my English is different, my body is different and then I kept training in both of them for the whole shoot. And then if you look at a frame

TV watch list

DOCUMENTARY

'White House Christmas 2014'

If you're curious what Christmas decorating for the White House entails, be sure to check this show out, which gives a top-to-bottom look at what's involved in decorating the rooms and the various gigantic Christmas trees. How big? Well, one room has an 18-foot-high tree, while another has two 14-footers. There's also a 300-pound gingerbread White House replica to admire. **SUNDAY, 8 P.M., HGTV**

"CRISTELA" / ABC

COMEDY

'Cristela'

Cristela gets in the spirit of the season with her mother and her sister by taking part in their big Christmas tradition: making tamales. A tamale does sound pretty good right about now. **FRIDAY, 8:30 P.M., ABC**

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"Marco Polo" premieres today on Netflix. / PHIL BRAY FOR NETFLIX

from the last episode and a frame from the first one, they are two different guys.

Much of the shooting was done in Malaysia. Where in the country were you?
We were in the south near Singapore. We had these brand new Pinewood Studios, which were amazing — the biggest thing I've ever seen in my life. It was just a big theme park with 700 people from 27 countries from all over the world, just creating and working every day. It was incredible. It was just massive.

How do you describe your version of Marco Polo?
My Marco Polo, he is of course curious about things. He's never satisfied. In this way he's a little bit like Kublai Khan. He has this quality where he's totally the first modern man. He was the first man to build a bridge between East and West. I focused my job on the fact that he never judged. He watched these things that were totally different, and maybe evil things, and gross things, and he always finds a way to understand the reasons behind them. He's an open-minded guy and a fearless guy.

LISA WEIDENFELD
@LisaWeidenfeld
lisa.weidenfeld@metro.us

Reputation

Going swimming

As an Italian, do you find Polo's reputation to be different here in the States?
Yes. It's totally different. You have here the swimming pool game. In Italy, we know him as a big guy, but not so big. In China, he's a hero, a big hero. So it's beautiful to see how the different cultures have accepted this.

Had you heard of the swimming pool game before?
No. The first time I'd heard of it was from a German.

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Dance. Fast hip-hop and slow Japanese butoh blend in this new collaboration.

A duet of opposites

Michael Sakamoto and Rennie Harris reach common ground in dance. / JANELLE WEATHERFORD

Quoted

"I feel like this is probably the piece I've been waiting to do my whole life. It encompasses all the aspects of who I am." Sakamoto

When Michael Sakamoto was 15 and growing up in Los Angeles, he would spend hours in front of his bedroom mirror, behind closed doors, trying to emulate the popping moves he'd seen on the city's hip-hop scene. He seemingly left those moves behind when he dedicated himself to the study and practice of butoh, the Japanese dance theater form that arose in the aftermath of World War II.

But those two worlds have finally converged in "Flash," the new piece that Sakamoto co-created with Philly hip-hop dance pioneer Rennie Harris.

Though most dancers get their start as children, Sakamoto didn't discover butoh until his mid-20s. He was a photographer and video and media artist with no real desire to be a performer — until he saw a performance by Kazuo Ohno, one of the co-founders of butoh, in 1993.

Style

Finding a theme

Despite the difference in their styles, Sakamoto and Harris share similar philosophical approaches to dance that allowed them to find common ground in their duet piece.

"Rennie approaches hip-hop through his spirituality, through his personal history, and through all the various forms and styles and vocabularies of movement that grew out of hip-hop culture," Sakamoto explains. "That's how I approach butoh as well.

"Intercultural dialogue, understanding and sharing are really important because there's so much strife and tension in the world. We're just trying to add our voices to that healing."

"When I saw an 86-year-old man do a 90-minute solo, holding the audience's rapt attention with minimum movement but so intense, so passionate, incredibly dark and incredibly light all at the same time," he says. "I was hooked."

The seeds for "Flash" were planted when Sakamoto read a review of Harris' signature piece, "Facing Mekka," in which the critic noted the influence of butoh's "body in crisis" approach in Harris' work. Sakamoto was intrigued, and got the opportunity to meet Harris a few years later when the hip-hop choreographer was teaching at UCLA.

"We started this dialogue about how the two cultures come from very similar post-war roots," Sakamoto says. "The first-generation artists in both butoh and hip-hop really created a form of performance and of expressing the self from conditions of social marginalization."

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Raise a mug

Toasty hot chocolate on a cold snowy day is one of the things about winter we can get behind (see also: over-the-top holiday decorations in South Philly and glove/mitten hybrids). In honor of today being that most sacred of holidays, National Cocoa Day, here are five places to drink it — both classic and boozy. **RACHEL VIGODA**

Shake Shack's Salted Caramel Hot Cocoa

Get this blend of bittersweet dark chocolate, caramel sauce, sea salt and milk at any Shake Shack location.
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Mugshots' Aztec Hot Chocolate

The Fairmount coffeehouse's version has a kick, with cayenne pepper and cinnamon blended with dark chocolate sauce and milk, topped with whipped cream.
$3.78
1925 Fairmount Ave.

The Victoria Freehouse's Aero Mint Hot Chocolate

Fancy some candy with your cocoa? This one has chocolate, peppermint, cinnamon and vanilla whipped cream, topped with a Nestle Aero Mint bar.
$5, $8 for a spiked version
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Hard Rock's Spiked Cocoa Press

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Online dating for every generation

Modern life. Here's how you can help everyone in your family find love online.

Frank Jackson and his mother, Maggie, are like a lot of modern families: They have dinner together regularly, keep each other updated on their lives — and they're both online dating at the same time.

"I'm a novice at it," admits Maggie, a 60-something nurse who lives in Brooklyn, New York. "I'm retired and my kids are grown, and I'm just looking for companionship."

"My mom has great standards," adds Frank, 28.

Older daters will likely have a much higher response rate on a dating site if they choose one that's geared toward people in their age range, says Virginia Roberts, an online dating coach.

Roberts tells us the tricks of online dating when you're not in your 20s, 30s or 40s anymore — and reminds us that even mom might want just a casual fling.

Adapt to the world of social media

"Older daters tend to have a more formal style of communication," says Roberts. "It's important to spend some time writing both your profile and any messages that you send out in a very fun voice."

She stresses that "fun" doesn't mean immature. "They don't have to conceal their ages," she continues. "They should just have a 'joie de vivre.'"

Use Facebook as a guide

Looking for examples of how to write a fun message? Look no further than Facebook. "You might have a daughter on Facebook," she says. "That breezy tone that reads very informally is what you should be going for."

Know what to share with your family

While it may not be unusual to have several single adults in a family at the same time, that doesn't mean that things won't get awkward. Be wary of oversharing — or asking for — dating details.

"I think the most important thing is to know when to back down," says Roberts. "You might want your mom to find a nice, steady guy. But your 70-something mom, quite frankly, may just want casual sex because she grew up at a time when that wasn't done."

Examples like this, says Roberts, is why setting boundaries is important. "You should step away before it becomes uncomfortable," she says.

Navigating the world of online dating can be challenging for older users. / DIGITAL VISION

An example

Write messages that are informal

Sometimes, online daters who grew up in a different era can get bogged down in formality when writing a message. Roberts offers this example for livening things up. Instead of writing:

Dear John,
Hello! I see that you enjoy sailing. [Several formal sentences in the same style follow.]
Sincerely,
Mary

Roberts suggest this:

Dear John,
I love that you love to sail. So do I. Where are your favorite places to go? [Add another engaging sentence here.] Hope you are doing well, Mary

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ALL PHOTOS GETTY IMAGES

1 Johnny Depp a fan of naked Kate Middleton

Hopefully, Prince William and Kate Middleton's U.S. trip didn't involve a run-in with Johnny Depp. The star forked over more than $100,000 for a pair of pieces by street artist Pegasus featuring a naked Middleton. One, which gained notoriety when Pegasus spray painted it on a wall in North London, features the royal wife cradling her pregnant stomach with a crown atop it, the logo for "Game of Thrones" stenciled underneath. Depp commissioned a second nude while at the London gallery show for the artist's work. "I knew Johnny was coming and wanted the two Kate Middleton works," Pegasus's manager, Leonard Villa, tells In Touch Weekly. "He was extremely charming and immediately bought the painting and put down an offer for the second one." Depp spent another $40,000 on a Pegasus portrait of Queen Elizabeth II, though one can only hope she's more clothed than her granddaughter-in-law.

THE WORD

Ned Ehrbar takes on the world of gossip.

NED EHRBAR
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ned.ehrbar@metro.us

Daily video

A 'Star Trek: The Next Generation' Christmas carol

'Tis the season, even for the nerds. Even if you're not a massive Trekkie, you'll get a kick out of this delightful edit that turns Jean-Luc Picard and crew into inadvertent carolers singing, "Make it so, make it so, make it so."

YOUTUBE, SUPERCHIEF64

"F— Y'ALL. I'M EATING CHEESEBURGERS AND F—ING FINE BITCHES."

2 Chris Rock has nothing but admiration for Leonardo DiCaprio

Chris Rock has been on something of a tear lately, making some pointed and perfectly worded observations about Hollywood, race issues in America and the like. But it's not all criticism for Rock. There are a few things he has genuine appreciation for, like Leonardo DiCaprio's lifestyle. As Rock tells Howard Stern during an interview: "I love the guy. He enjoys himself. If he's not doing a movie, he's 40 pounds more, with a fine motherf—er. With a beard and model. F—y'all. I'm eating cheeseburgers and f—ing fine bitches." The American dream, that.

3 Keira Knightley is pregnant

It's been a big week for Keira Knightley. First she earns nominations from both SAG and the Golden Globes for her work alongside Benedict Cumberbatch in "The Imitation Game," and now this: The British actress and her husband, James Righton, are expecting their first child, according to Page Six. "Multiple sources" claim that the "Pride and Prejudice" and "Love Actually" star is more than three months pregnant during awards season — she's been abstaining from alcohol at events and opting for looser-fitting gowns. And Star magazine first jumped the gun on speculation last month, reporting that Knightley and her stylist were already working on some baby bump–appropriate awards season looks.

DON'T WORRY, THE BOTTLE IS JUST FOR SHOW.

4 Benedict Cumberbatch trying to make nerds' brains explode

While debating the differences between his characters on "Sherlock" and "Doctor Who" on Chris Hardwicke's Nerdist podcast, Benedict Cumberbatch's choice of words is sure to get the fan-fiction writers out there all hot and bothered. "He talks fast and is clever. That is literally the only bracket they share," Cumberbatch says of the two. "They've got different dress senses, different tastes in the sex of their partners." While Cumberbatch innocently meant that Holmes is always aided by a male Dr. Watson, Doctor Who more commonly keeps a female assistant, though not always. Still, feel free to let your imagination run away with you.

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Letters

Kardashian might just be right

Re: 'Kim Kardashian considers weight gain God's punishment' (Metro, Dec. 11) To begin with, I think Kim Kardishan looks smashing. Who says you have to be thin to look good? Well, lots of people, actually, but I don't agree. Second, God has a personal relationship with everybody, whether they know it or not. Think of Tevye in "Fiddler on the Roof." He did a lot of complaining, and as long as he didn't cross the line into out-and-out impiety — which he never did — God listened patiently. I frequently talk to God like that. I make no claims that He answers.

DANIEL CANTOR, VIA EMAIL

Good policing is possible

Every police situation is different and must be handled and subsequently examined individually.

Having said that the assertions by some, in and out of law enforcement, that Eric Garner is somehow culpable in his death would be laughable if not so blatantly disrespectful, both to his family and the NYPD itself.

Professional, well-meaning police officers routinely apprehend armed suspects across this country every day without incident and certainly without causing the death of the suspect.

LARRY D FOWLER, VIA EMAIL

Thursday's answer

YOU ARE INVITED TO THE 'HOLIDAYS'

Opinion

TOM FOREMAN

POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT FOR CNN

I'm a big fan of Christmas. Trees, lights, presents, carols; fire up the Yule log and spice up the egg nog. Yet, it has become a challenge for D.C.'s lawmakers who are always trying to avoid offending their ever more diverse constituencies. After all, how do you wish a blessed season to one voter who thinks Christmas is under attack, while another is at your elbow sipping punch and thinking it's a bunch of poppycock?

So I've come up with a holiday party guide for Congress in these sensitive times.

First, decorations: Go with polar bears, the ones made of wire that light up. They are festive, seem loosely aligned with the holidays and yet can pass for a statement of solidarity on global warming.

Second, food: This is tricky what with all the folks following diets that are gluten-free, vegan, macrobiotic, meat-loving, plant-hating or whatever. Play it safe.

Put out some Doritos and say, "Yeah, the caterer was involved in a traffic accident. Went to the hospital!"

That should keep the critics from tearing down your tinsel, and in these budget-cutting times you might even save a highway project or two.

For party music, some would suggest "Jingle Bells" or "Let It Snow," which are odes to winter. But that might provoke your more religious guests to howl, "Saturnalia!" and call you a pagan. So let me suggest a piano-side sing-along of "The Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald."

It sounds vaguely ecclesiastic, everyone knows it and the verses are suited to lusty belting by guests who are three sheets to the wassail.

Which, BTW, is the beverage I recommend. No one really knows what it is, so you can pass off alcoholic and nonalcoholic versions and no one will dare argue which is correct.

And here's the best part: When it's done and your guests file out, this is the exchange you'll have even if one tries to question you at the door.

"What the hell was all that?"

"Just celebrating the holiday!"

"Which one?"

"Take your pick!"

CNN=POLITICS

Sudoku: Easy and hard

		2				5	3	
8							4	7
			2	1		9		8
9	4			2				
	2		4		1		9	
				3			2	4
1		8		5	6			
7	6							9
	5	3				1		

5		7				9		8
			3			1		7
					8	6		2
			8	5				6
	4	8		9		5	2	
6				3	2			
7		2	9					
4		3			1			
9		6				2		4

How to play
Fill in the grid so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1-9. There is no math involved. You solve the puzzle with reasoning and logic.

Horoscope

♐ Sagittarius | Nov. 22-Dec. 21. You will discover a new way to solve an old problem. Love is highlighted, so don't hesitate to involve your romantic interest in a challenging activity.

♑ Capricorn | Dec. 22-Jan. 20. It's likely that you will be confused about recent emotional happenings. Working on an enjoyable project will keep you from facing discord.

♒ Aquarius | Jan. 21-Feb. 18. Surprise everyone around you by making personal changes or adopting an interesting new way of doing things. Viewing life with optimism will bring positive results.

♓ Pisces | Feb. 19-March 20. Being vigilant while traveling will spare you any unnecessary setbacks or delays. Stick to the rules and take care of matters yourself. Don't trust others to do things for you.

♈ Aries | March 21-April 20. Love is in the air. Plan a romantic getaway or engage in social events geared toward meeting someone new. Travel will play a large part in your success.

♉ Taurus | April 21-May 21. You will have concerns with an older or younger person in your life. Finances may be stretched if you have taken on responsibilities or overspent on luxury items.

♊ Gemini | May 22-June 20. Don't take anyone for granted. Spend time reinforcing important relationships to ensure that everyone is heading in the same direction.

♋ Cancer | June 21-July 22. If you are currently dissatisfied with your professional life, check out vocations that appeal to you. Discuss your thoughts with an expert in your field of choice.

♌ Leo | July 23-Aug. 22. Take some time to let a loved one know how much you appreciate him or her. If you are currently unattached, get out and mingle. You are likely to meet someone who will play an important role in your future.

♍ Virgo | Aug. 23-Sept. 22. Delays and setbacks will test your patience. Keeping your emotions in check will help you adapt to the changing circumstances and ride out any problems that arise.

♎ Libra | Sept. 23-Oct. 22. Adventure and excitement are calling you today. Group activities and social events will let others see your exuberant and cheerful side. Love will blossom.

♏ Scorpio | Oct. 23-Nov. 21. Scan help-wanted pages and online job postings, and arrange interviews. Update your resume to represent what you have to offer. EUGENIA LAST

Visit us online at Metro.us.
Use your smartphone to find today's crossword answers! Download and open the Blippar app on your smartphone and hold the screen over the puzzle.

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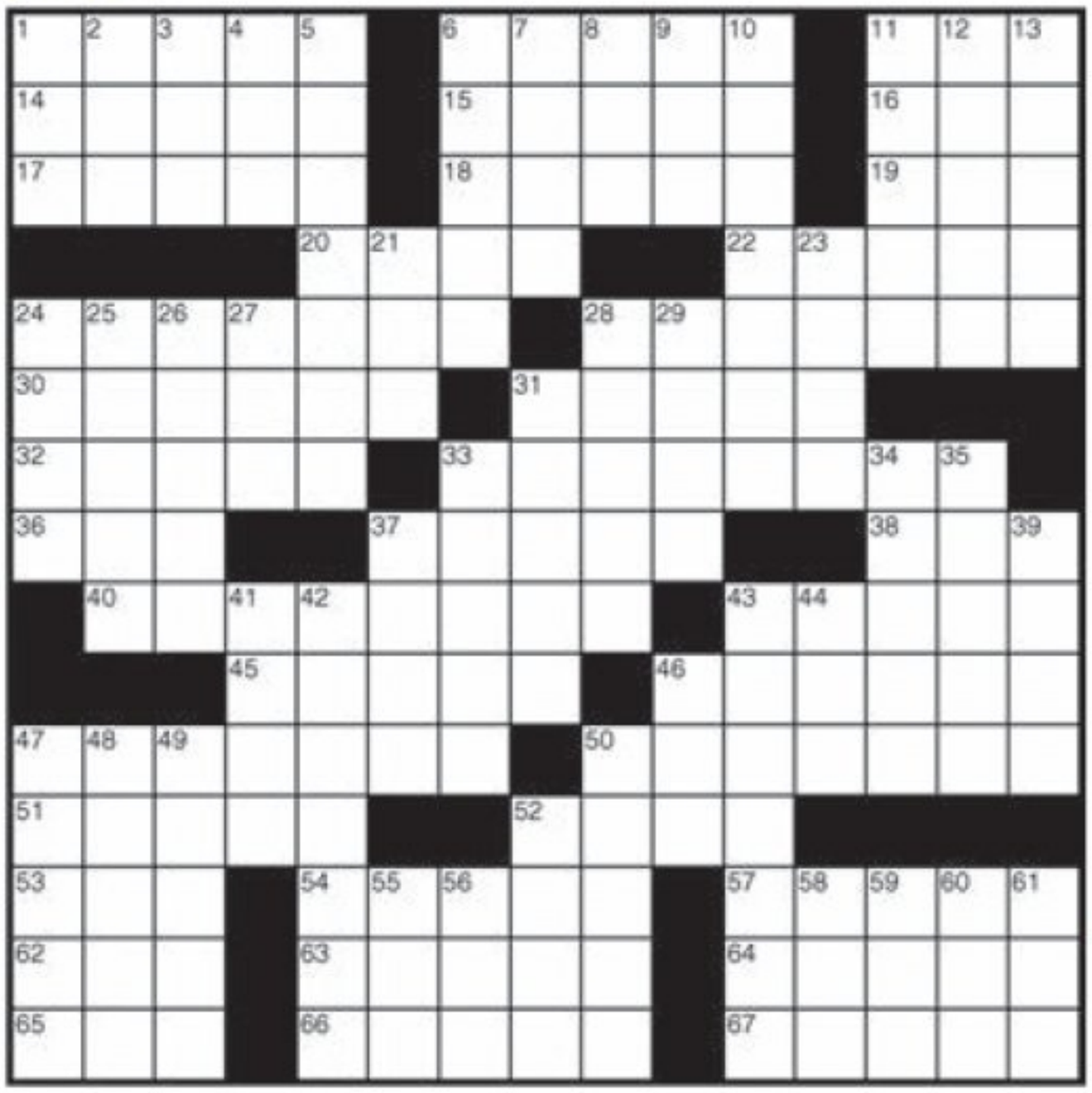

Across

1 Graphic
6 Like a crevasse
11 Width of a cir.
14 Haggling point
15 Singer — Judd
16 Peculiar
17 Delhi attire
18 Cancel
19 Kiki or Joey
20 Wife of Osiris
22 Not prohibited
24 Leisurely study
28 Chatty feline
30 Strains
31 Welsh dog
32 Garage jobs
33 Took part in a strike
36 Baseball stat
37 Tugs hard
38 Cratchit kid
40 Bucket passers
43 Of tender years
45 Winter woes
46 Cosmetic buy
47 Nonsense
50 Funny mistakes
51 Drinks for all
52 Icy precip
53 Get wrong
54 Customer, after the sale
57 Specks
62 Summer in Paris
63 Clan leader
64 Gullible
65 June honoree
66 Cornered (2 wds.)
67 Say hi

Down

1 CEO aides
2 A Gershwin
3 Caesar's man
4 Here, in Le Havre
5 Quits
6 Escargot
7 Neutral colors
8 Many many years
9 Down Under bird
10 Loot
11 Be evasive
12 Glimmerings
13 Fashion's — Simpson
21 Stockholm carrier
23 Radiate
24 Volcano goddess
25 Bedroom community
26 Concrete reinforcer
27 "Where Eagles Dare" actress
28 Wind indicators
29 Vexes
31 Movies
33 Rice field
34 Piano exercise
35 Restaurant patron
37 Sturdy lock
39 Dugout VIPs
41 Desktop picture
42 Skier's transport
43 Caterwauling
44 It gives a hoot
46 Taro product
47 Dog show info
48 Ventricle neighbor
49 Emulated a siren
50 Strong and tough
52 Zeus' consort
55 Thai temple
56 Ballpoint point
58 Rowboat need
59 Affinity
60 Blvd.
61 Mount a gem

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3

SPORTS

Back-to-back ball

Sixers have busy weekend

The 76ers (2-19) have a winnable game away from home against the subpar Brooklyn Nets (8-12) on Friday. They then travel back down I-95 for the second game of their back-to-back Saturday, hosting the much tougher Memphis Grizzlies (17-4).

DON'T BE AFRAID, DANCE WITH NEW PARTNERS

Now that the fantasy semifinals are here, the little man inside your head will tell you to dance with the girl you brought to the party. Squash that voice.

The increased stakes only mean we need to follow our process even tighter now. All year we've been aggressively playing matchups and getting ahead of the points, not chasing them. That means taking some risks with unproven guys, even in the playoffs. The best options:

Johnny Manziel may actually be a good fantasy play this week. / GETTY IMAGES

Donte's inferno

It took the Colts nearly four months, but they now realize freakishly talented rookie Donte Moncrief (50 snaps in Week 13) is better than washed-up Hakeem Nicks (18 snaps). That's exciting by itself, but what makes it really scintillating is the demise of Reggie Wayne. It's gotten so bad for Wayne that the Colts are openly talking about shutting him down for a bit, which would turn Moncrief into the No. 2 receiver for Andrew Luck. In a home game against a Houston defense giving up the second-most fantasy points to wideouts, "Man" Crief is likely a better option than the No. 3 wideout on your playoff squad.

Mr. Wilson's hood

Brandon Marshall's season-ending rib/lung injury is Marquess Wilson's gain. This is a 6-foot-4 wideout that was highly productive in the Pac-12 before getting into a spat with his coach. So the Bears got a mid-round talent in the seventh round of the 2013 draft, and he earned the No. 3 job with exemplary play this offseason, impressing pass-game guru Marc Trestman.

Wilson gets his big breakout chance Monday, where he'll be facing a terrible Saints secondary at home. Top Saints corner Keenan Lewis projects to shadow Alshon Jeffery, leaving Wilson to do work.

Here's Johnny

Browns OC Kyle Shanahan knows how to handle a running quarterback. All we have to do is go back to 2012, when a then-healthy Robert Griffin III went berserk with Shanny at the controls. Now he has Johnny Manziel, more of an improvisational runner than RG3, but just as dangerous. Manziel will also have Jordan Cameron and Josh Gordon, and is at home facing a Bengals defense that has struggled to contain running quarterbacks. Johnny Football is set up for a big statistical splash in his first NFL start.

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3 Things to watch for as the

NFL. The Eagles can go a long way toward wrapping up the division with a win vs. Dallas Sunday night.

The Eagles hold their playoff destiny in their own hands. If they beat the Cowboys on Sunday night, they will only need to win one more game, against either the Redskins or Giants, to clinch the NFC East (due to their edge in tiebreakers).

If the Eagles fall in their home finale, they will need some help from the Cowboys as well as wins of their own to win the division, though a Wild Card spot will remain a possibility.

But that doesn't matter to the Birds one bit. What matters is waiting at Lincoln Financial Field this weekend. And Chip Kelly is treating it like a regular game even though it's really not.

"I don't think one game is more significant than any other game," the coach said. "If you didn't prepare and win nine games to this point, this game would mean absolutely nothing. You just can't wake up one day and say, 'Hey, this game is really important this week,' and then that diminishes the game the next week."

The Eagles' defense struggled mightily last week against Seattle, but the 25th-ranked Dallas passing defense should give the Birds more of a chance to spread their wings.

But the run defense will have its hands full. DeMarco Murray, the NFL's leading rusher is coming off a season-best 179 yards vs. Chicago last week.

This after the Birds surrendered 188 rushing yards to Seattle last week.

Here are three other things to keep an eye on:

EVAN MACY
@evan_macy
evan.macy@metro.us

1 Much more McCoy

LeSean McCoy told reporters last Sunday after collecting just 50 yards on 17 carries and coughing up a costly fumble that he had played his worst game this year. Perhaps it's good scheduling then, that he will play the Cowboys this Sunday, a team he's gained over 100 yards four times against and whom he tore up in a Week 13, 33-10 win.

"I thought we blocked really well and I thought our offensive line had a really good game," Kelly said, recalling McCoy's 159 yards on Thanksgiving. "And I thought LeSean hit the holes really well. So it was a combination of both of those things."

And in this game?

"It's just about really going out and executing and which team can execute better and which team can block better and which team can tackle better," he said.

McCoy and the run game, when running on all cylinders, makes the Eagles one of the best teams in football. / ALL PHOTOS GETTY IMAGES

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J0668 - Fleming III, Herman • J0833 - Phiffer, Marjorie • K0909 - DeStefanIdge, Michael • K0931 - Welch, Michelle • L0954 - Maryanski, Tiffany
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Eagles host the Cowboys

2 Rested Romo

Battered Tony Romo looked like himself last week against Chicago, and the Eagles expect him to be mobile and to be a threat offensively alongside Murray.

"We're preparing for speed option," Kelly said. "A lot of quarterback power runs now that he has the extra days to go."

Dallas, of course, played back-to-back Thursday games, starting with their Thanksgiving loss and continuing with their win vs the Bears.

"They are going to do what they do," Kelly said."But with any player, when you have a couple extra days of rest, that helps you. We're preparing for Tony Romo at his best, and when Tony's at his best, we have to be at our best."

The Cowboys posted 41 points last week and Romo tossed three touchdown passes.

Defensive coordinator Bill Davis is bracing for Romo.

"We'll see a healthier Tony Romo," Davis said. "We'll see a healthier team, a team that's got plenty of time to prepare for us, including a game with us under our belt but we also have that time."

ROMO HAS BEEN HIT OR MISS THIS SEASON, AND THE BIRDS CERTAINLY HOPE HE MISSES SUNDAY NIGHT IN PHILLY.

3 Strong regular season finale at the Linc

Prior to their letdown last week against the Seahawks, the Eagles were unbeaten at home.

A win Sunday would cap off a pretty impressive 7-1 run at Lincoln Financial Field. And the fact the Philly gets to play another night game makes it even more likely the Eagles will prevail, based on recent events.

Philadelphia has won its last five night games and six of seven during the Chip Kelly era.

It's a big game, but the Eagles live for big games.

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A099 - Johnson, Sarah • A108 - Fitzhugh, Anthony • A141 - Rivera, George • A164 - Keita, Comeika A208 - Seacor, Jmease • B119 - Kinsey, Darrien R. • B130 - Vazquez, David • D010 - Walters Jr, Norman R D013 - Lederer, Christine • E092 - SEENEY, SILVER • E096 - Sherman, Lakeisha • F024 - Burkhardt, Shauna

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1021 - Santiago, Barbara • 1085 - Owsenicznik, Jennifer • 1093 - Croom, Raynard • 1120 - Reyes, Carmen 1182 - Jankowski, Francis • 1223 - Gazdi, Brenda • 1277 - Foulner, Elaine • 2076 - Smith, David 2085 - Ortiz, Jennifer • 2151A - Ramos, Anna • 2194 - Brown, Hania • 2248 - Weston Jr., Paul • 2271 - Brown, Felicia 2349 - Martinez, Elodia • 3168 - Graham, Scott • 3223 - Hoffman, Jr, Russell • 3413 - Brown, Joy

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The Broncos will have to earn their 11th win in San Diego on Sunday. / GETTY IMAGES

Division races heat up in NFL Week 15

NFL. Time is running out for a few playoff hopefuls.

There are several big games Sunday afternoon with big postseason implications to watch before the Eagles and Cowboys kick off.

Steelers (-2) at Falcons
If the playoffs started today both these teams would be in the Wild Card round. For the Steelers (8-5), they have to keep position. For the Falcons (5-8), they have to show they deserve the spot (as NFC South leaders).

Dolphins at Patriots (-7.5)
Two teams headed in different directions clash in this AFC North battle. The Pats look to clinch their home-field edge throughout the playoffs while the Fins need a win to leapfrog three teams to make the Wild Card round.

Texans at Colts (-6.5)
The Texans can't really catch the Colts for the division title — they're two games back with three to play — but nothing has been settled yet.

Bucs at Panthers (-3.5)
Can Carolina close the (small) gap in the NFC South without starting QB Cam Newton?

Bengals at Browns (-1.5)
The Browns need some magic to make a run at the playoffs. Maybe that's what Johnny Manziel is for.

Broncos (-4) at Chargers
San Diego needs a win to keep their No. 6 seed alive with so many teams behind them in the AFC while Denver looks to catch New England for home field throughout.

49ers at Seahawks (-10)
The 49ers' slim playoff hopes could die in Seattle.

More to watch

Redskins vs. Giants (-6.5) headlines the rest of the Week 15 slate.

- Raiders at Chiefs (-10)
- Jaguars at Ravens (-14)
- Packers at Bills (-4.5)
- Jets (-2.5) at Titans
- Vikings at Lions (-8.5)

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More trades on the horizon for Phillies

MLB. The Winter meetings have finished but the Phillies' offseason is likely just getting started.

Jonathan Papelbon and Carlos Ruiz could be on the way out. / GETTY IMAGES

Phillies General Manager Ruben Amaro, Jr. wasn't kidding when he said at the end of the winter meetings in San Diego that interest in some of his team's players was rising.

Jimmy Rollins has traded his red pinstripes for Dodger blue.

Antonio Bastardo has moved across the state to Pittsburgh to bolster the Pirates bullpen. The Phillies dealt the erratic Bastardo, 29, for Joely Rodriguez. The 23-year-old old had a 4.84 ERA in 30 appearances, (21 starts) but impressed after the season in the Arizona Fall League where he posted a 2.38 ERA with 22 strikeouts. Expect Rodriguez to start the season on the talent deprived AAA rotation in Lehigh Valley.

Who's next?

It's a safe bet that Marlon Byrd never plays another game for the Phillies. Byrd, 37, offers righthanded power, which isn't an easy commodity to come by. The Orioles have a huge righthanded void since Nelson Cruz signed with the Mariners. Byrd has $8 million coming his way in 2015 and an option for that amount in 2016. Meanwhile, Torii Hunter, 39, who is past his prime, signed with Minnesota. Hunter, who will make $10 million in 2015, isn't on a level with Byrd.

Carlos Ruiz, 35, has quite a bit on the odometer but there are a number of teams that can use such a capable veteran catcher, who has a reasonable contract.

Amaro will try to deal Ruiz, one of the best handlers of pitchers in the game who has some occasional pop. Don't be surprised if Ruiz lands with the Texas Rangers.

You know Amaro worked hard to unload Jonathan Papelbon while at the winter meetings.

Papelbon has been relatively reliable but he's a luxury for a last place club. Papelbon has been decent, but not dominant.

Don't be surprised if the Tigers, who tanked for two consecutive seasons in the playoffs primarily due to leaky bullpens, finally bite. The problem for the Phillies is the contract Papelbon signed.

"The biggest issue is the money," a National League scout said. "He has a bad contract.

"That's a much bigger deal than his personality."

Papelbon will "be tough to deal," said the scout, "but if a team wants to shore up their bullpen and the Phillies eat a lot of cash, there's a chance Papelbon will be dealt. It's a very interesting offseason for Philly."

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Cole report

Don't forget Cole Hamels, who is still the most desirable Phillies player this offseason.

- The Red Sox could be out of the Hamels sweepstakes after they traded Yoenis Cespedes to the Tigers for starter Rick Porcello, but their rotation is far from complete.
- The Dodgers are still the favorite to deal for Hamels, (if he is traded).
- Once free agent ace Max Scherzer signs a deal, which is expected to be soon, the rest of the starting pitching market should become clearer.

MLB. Rollins reported trade to the Dodgers comes as big shock

J-ROLL, PHILLIES HIT KING

A month before Jayson Werth played his final game as a Philly in 2010, Jimmy Rollins was asked about the team's most potent right-handed bat possibly departing.

"Why would anyone ever want to leave here," Rollins asked. "I know I wouldn't ever want to leave."

Well, as the late Phillies sportscaster, Harry Kalas, would say, Rollins is outta here!

The longest tenured athlete in Philadelphia and the Phillies all-time leader in hits with 2,306, has reportedly been traded to the Los Angeles Dodgers.

The 2007 MVP, who led the Phillies to a World Series championship in 2008, will play for a contender. His longtime coach and friend, Larry Bowa, predicted this would eventually happen.

When there were rumors that the Phillies would try to send Rollins to the St. Louis Cardinals in July of 2013, Bowa, then an MLB analyst, told Metro that he could see his one-time protege playing in baseball heaven.

"Are you going to tell me Jimmy is going to stay in Philadelphia to set some records," Bowa said. "I don't believe it. And I should know because he is like a son to me. I really believe that he would like to win another championship and if he has that opportunity with another team, I believe he'll let a trade happen."

Visit **Metro.us** to read more about the Phillies and the MLB offseason.

Rollins set the franchise hit record and has moved on for a chance for more moments in the spotlight and a run for another World Series ring.

How long will Rollins play ball?

"After this contract ends, I would like to play at least another five years," Rollins said. "I'm in shape. But we'll see what happens. I'm not thinking about five years from now. I'm just thinking about next year when I'm back here."

Well, Rollins won't be back at Citizens Bank Park until August 4 when he returns in Dodger blue.

Padres prospect Zach Eflin, dealt to the Dodgers in the Matt Kemp deal, is expected to be one of the players the Phillies receive for Rollins along with pitcher Tom Windle.

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